

Message Text

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FOLLOWING REPEAT NOUAKCHOTT 128 ACTIONSECSTATE INFO ABIDJAN
JAN 13

QUOTE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE NOUAKCHOTT 0128

ABIDJAN FOR FAA REP

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: EAIR, MR, AFSP
SUBJECT: US OFFICIAL TRAVEL ON AIR MAURITANIA

REF: (A) 76 STATE 184156, (B) 76 NOUAKCHOTT 1047, (C)
76 NOUAKCHOTT 1643, (D) 76 STATE 192161, (E) 76 NOUAKCHOTT 1781,
(F) 76 STATE 165570

1. SUMMARY: HUGHES AIRWEST CORP., WHICH HOLDS MAINTENANCE
CONTRACT FOR AIR MAURITANIA (AIRM) HAS REQUESTED EMBASSY RE-
CONSIDER 1976 DECISION TO PROHIBIT US OFFICIAL TRAVEL ON
AIRLINE (REF A). HUGHES CONTENDS UNSAFE PRACTICES AND CONDI-
TIONS WHICH LED TO DECISION NO LONGER EXIST. END SUMMARY

2. BACKGROUND: IN APRIL 1976, HUGHES BECAME CONCERNED ENOUGH
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ABOUT UNSAFE CONDITIONS IN AIR MAURITANIA TO INFORM THE GIRM
MINISTRY OF COMMERCE AND TRANSPORTATION THAT IT WOULD NOT BE
HELD RESPONSIBLE FOR ACCIDENTS RESULTING FROM ELEMENTS OVER
WHICH HUGHES HAS NO CONTROL (REF B). FURTHER DETERIORATIONS
REPORTED IN JULY 1976 (REFS C & D) INCLUDING CRASH OF LEASED
DC-3 IN TIDJIKDJA ON JULY 23, LED TO DEPARTMENT NOTICE TO ALL
POSTS THAT ALL OFFICIAL TRAVELLERS SHOULD AVOID AIRM UNTIL

FURTHER NOTICE. THE GIRM WAS NOTIFIED OF THE ACTION IN A LETTER WHICH AT SAME TIME ASSURED GIRM THAT USG STOOD READY TO ASSIST IN CORRECTING PROBLEM AND RESTORATION ACCEPTABLE SAFETY RATING (REF E).

3. IMPROVEMENTS IN AIRM OPERATIONS WERE NOTED SOON THEREAFTER (AUGUST 1976). SUBSEQUENT DECISIONS TO TAKE THE DC-3S AND (QUITE RECENTLY) DC-4S OUT OF OPERATION, AS OF MARCH 1, 1978 WILL REDUCE AIRM FLEET TO TWO FAIRCHILD F-27AS AND ONE PIPER NAVAJO AIRCRAFT ALL OF WHICH MAINTAINED BY HUGHES WHO CLAIM TO BE ABLE TO GUARANTEE AIRWORTHINESS. SINCE NOVEMBER 1976 DC-3S AND DC-4S HAVE NOT RPT NOT BEEN MAINTAINED BY HUGHES.

4. FYI: HUGHES CURRENTLY HAS NO CONTROL OVER ASPECTS AIRM OPERATION OVQR THAN MAINTENANCE. HOWEVER, ON JANUARY 9, 1978 COMPANY REP FROM HEADQUARTERS QUIETLY SUBMITTED PROPOSAL TO MINISTER OF COMMERCE, NSPORTS & TOURISM, BUT NOT TO AIRM, THAT HUGHES UNDERTAKE COMPREHENSIVE MANAGEMENT EFFECTIVENESS STUDY AT COST. HUGHES CLAIMS IF PROPOSAL ACCEPTED, THEY WILL THEN BE IN POSITION ACCURATELY ASSESS ALL ASPECTS WITH A VIEW TO EXPANDING AIRM OPERATION INCLUDING ADDITION OF JET CAPABILITY.
END FYI

5. HUGHES TOOK OCCASION OF NEW AMBASSADOR'S ARRIVAL TO RAISE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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QUESTION OF LIFTING THE BAN ON OFFICIAL AMERICAN USE. THE AMBASSADOR ADMITTED TO SOME DISCOMFORT WITH A SITUATION WHEREIN AMERICAN OFFICIALS ARE NOT PERMITTED TO FLY IN AIRCRAFT MAINTAINED BY AN AMERICAN FIRM. HE HASTENED TO ADD, HOWEVER, THAT HE OBVIOUSLY COULD NOT REVERSE HIS PREDECESSOR'S DECISION UNLESS HE HAD EVIDENCE THAT AIRM HAS A CLEAN BILL OF HEALTH FROM A RECOGNIZED REGULATORY ORGANIZATION, PREFERABLY FAA. HUGHES COUNTERED WITH STATEMENT THAT AIRM HAS BEEN CERTIFIED BY THE FRENCH REGULATORY BODY VERITAS, WHOSE STANDARDS THEY CLAIMED ARE MORE STRINGENT THAN FAA'S. AMBASSADOR ASKED HUGHES REP TO SUBMIT FORMAL REQUEST, WITH SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION, FOR RESCISSION OF BAN, AND PROMISED PROMPT CONSIDERATION.

6. WE WOULD APPRECIATE ANY ADVICE THAT THE DEPARTMENT AND FAA CAN PROVIDE. IN THIS REGARD, A VISIT FROM THE FAA REP IN ABIDJAN WOULD BE HELPFUL. THE ANSWER TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTIONS WOULD ALSO BE OF BENEFIT TO US: (A) DOES FAA ACCEPT VERITAS CERTIFICATION AND VICE VERSA? (B) DOES AIRM MEET THE SAFETY STANDARDS OF ICAO AND THE INTERNATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF AIRLINE PILOT? KRYZA. UNQUOTE CHRISTOPHER

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